FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

Fiscal Year 2023
Project # 2023-WB-005: CO-WP307

Region	Project Title
5	Jones Hill East, Jones Hill to Route 9

Project Type	Town(s)	County	Management Unit
New Construction	Schroon	Essex	Hoffman Notch Primitive and Wilderness Areas

Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project

Portions of the proposed North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) have been identified in the Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area. The 2012 Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan (UMP) supports the construction of the NCNST. The UMP says:

- *"Regardless of the North Country National Scenic Trail, adopt the eastern 4-mile Platt Brook trail segment from North Pond to Route 9 to be constructed as an addition to the Hoffman Notch Wilderness trail system."*
- *"If approved, adopt the western segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail through the southern portion of the unit, as described in the NCNST section below."*

The objective of the Jones Hill Trail is to eventually be an integral section of the North Country National Scenic Trail, a long-distance trail that currently spans 8 states from North Dakota to Vermont. The Jones Hill Trail is one of the few remaining pieces needed to fully connect the NCNST through the Adirondacks. The route as prescribed in the UMP will enter the Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area on the western border from the Irishtown Road in Minerva. It then will require new trail from there east to the Bailey Pond Trail. It will then follow Bailey Pond Trail east to Hoffman Notch Trail where it will proceed north along Hoffman Notch Trail to its intersection with Big Pond Trail. It will then follow Big Pond Trail east to its intersection with the recently constructed Jones Hill (West) Trail. This western section of Jones Hill Trail was constructed in 2018 and 2019 from Big Pond Trail to the summit of Jones Hill. The intent of the Jones Hill East Trail described in this work plan is to finish the last section of trail that will allow users to get through the Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area. Without this connection, the Jones Hill West trail is only an out and back hike to the summit of Jones Hill, and the NCNST connection will need to use a 12-mile-long paved road walk along Hoffman Road and NYS Route 9 to connect the same points.

The North Country National Scenic Trail handbook alludes to several facets of the desired condition of the NCNST as a whole. Some of these desired conditions are a facility which protects the trail's natural and cultural resources while also providing the best possible recreational experience for the user. This includes offering stimulation of the senses, a place for learning, a feeling of safety, re-creation for the soul, exercise for the body, and overwhelming satisfaction. The Jones Hill segment of the NCNST will also follow these desired conditions and will aid in the overall consistency of trail feel, both within New York and between other states following this model. Meeting these desired conditions will rely on using the trail outlined in this work plan rather than using the 12-mile paved road connection.

In addition to the above conditions derived from the NCNST Handbook, this trail must be constructed in a way that protects the Wilderness experience. The design and layout of this trail is intended to allow users to enjoy the forest

while traveling through it, but not be visually impacted by the trail itself. The trail will have a firm and stable surface which remains intact and provides a safe surface for hikers. The corridor should remain free of invasive species, human waste, and litter. The tread will be constructed to remain well developed with minimal expansion. Overall, the trail is designed and will be constructed to aesthetically blend with the natural surroundings to enhance user experience.

Description of Project Specifications

The connection from the Big Pond Trail to State Route 9 in Schroon Lake proceeds generally northeasterly from the south side of North Pond to the summit of Jones Hill. The first 3.1 miles between the Big Pond Trail and the summit of Jones Hill was constructed in 2018. The construction on the remaining 3.5 miles between the summit of Jones Hill and the Dirgy Parking Lot on State Route 9 will begin in 2023. Approximately 2.5 miles will be new construction, 0.7-mile will be light drainage work along the road within the Hoffman Notch Primitive Area, and the remaining 0.3-mile under the I-87 Northway and across private lands will not need any modification.

Aspects of sustainable trail construction will be used including but not limited to brush and tree cutting, turnpiking, full bench cutting, steppingstones, and the construction of a 25-foot-long bridge over Platt Brook. These techniques will be implemented and used together in a way that creates a durable and sustainable surface while minimizing the overall impact to the site during trail construction. The entire length of this segment will have full tread development which is necessary to provide a tread that remains durable and sustainable through recreational use and environmental impacts. This means the entire traveled tread surface will consists of mineral soil. Trail hardening and bridge building will be done with on-site natural materials. The bridge will be constructed using three white cedar trees from on-site. These trees are 14–16-inch diameter at breast height (DBH). This will be a log bridge approximately 4 feet wide in which the logs function as the stringers and deck. The trail layout and construction techniques mentioned above armor against human use, and runoff and erosion making the trail more resilient and sustainable long term.

Description of Measures Taken to Avoid, Mitigate and Minimize Impacts to Natural Resources

Approximately 1 mile of trail will be located on private lands which are adjacent to I-87, and also on an old road corridor in the Hoffman Notch Primitive Area. This location requires very little work to establish a sustainable trail, so impacts will be minimal. The design for the remaining 2.5 miles of trail incorporates current sustainable construction techniques which minimize excessive slopes, avoid sensitive areas, and fully develop a firm and stable tread that is resistant to user-created and natural erosion. The new trail will be constructed to be sustainable while remaining aesthetically primitive in nature, so it blends with the wild character of the surrounding environment. Part of this blending is through careful micro layout that minimizes vegetative disturbance. This not only allows the trail to smoothly transition into its surroundings, but also maximizes root and soil retention in the corridor. Due to the trail layout, sustainable construction, and bridge design, the trail should not have any negative effects on water quality.

The trees to be removed are as follows: 263 Trees 1-3 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) and 61 Trees 3-16 inches DBH. Tree counts include all trees to be removed to complete the work described in this plan. The two 14-inch DBH and one 16-inch DBH White Cedar trees will serve as stringers for the bridge over Platt Brook.

	1"-3"	4"	6"	8"	10"	12"	14"	16"	**Total**
American beech		29	2	8					**214**
red spruce		1							**5**
eastern hophornbeam		3							**30**
eastern hemlock		7	2						**18**
striped maple		2							**33**
balsam fir									**7**
sugar maple		1	1	1		1			**13**
eastern white cedar							2	1	**3**
Eastern white pine									**1**
	263								
Total	**263**	**43**	**5**	**9**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**324**

The earthwork necessary to create a sustainable tread will vary throughout the trail due to varying slopes and drainage, but the constructed tread will remain between 18 and 24 inches wide. The surface of all tread will be of mineral soil. Using mineral soil rather than organic soil prevents tread degradation through erosion and organic decomposition. Drainage features such as proper side slope, grade reversals, etc. will be incorporated throughout the trail to ensure water is shed off the trail surface as quickly as possible. The open corridor encompassing the tread will be four feet wide and 12 feet high. This will allow for proper tread development and comfortable visitor use in all seasons. The preferred maximum slope is 10%, which can and will be achieved throughout the majority of the trail. Given difficult and steep terrain conditions, 10% slope may need to be exceeded in select areas, especially within the first 0.5 mile west of Platt Brook, which is generally between mile marker 1.9 and 2.4. This is the main ascent up the northeastern side of Jones Hill. In these areas, additional hardening, downslope retention, steppingstones, or other features may be necessary to ensure the tread remains sustainable. Where the trail crosses a side slope which is steeper, the upslope/backslope, above the hinge will be greater and extend further than lower slopes. In this rare instance, some work outside of the trail corridor may be necessary. The area described above is all within the main ascent up Jones Hill and located between mile marker 2.1 and 2.4. Within this area, there are only 3 approximately 50-foot-long sections that may require work outside of the trail corridor, all of which will be to construct sustainable backslope and down slope retention on the full bench cuts and will be a maximum of six (6)-feet-wide. All other benching and trail work will remain within the four-foot-wide trail corridor.

The trail crossing over Platt Brook is necessary and will be located at the narrowest area possible with high, firm and stable banks. The bridge size and placement will meet current NYS Flood Risk Management Guidance standards for long-term flood and climate resiliency. The reminder of the trail avoids stream crossings and wetlands to minimize any immediate and long-term impacts to these sensitive areas.

There are no rare, threatened, or endangered species identified on or within ¼-mile of the project area.

The work outlined above is necessary for long term resiliency to mitigate ever increasing weather events and expected human use. All the variables mentioned above were weighed and balanced in an effort to minimize short and long-term impacts to the site resulting in a sustainable facility that protects Forest Preserve values while also serving the users of the area.

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

The eastern most mile of this route was selected due to its use of a pre-existing parking area and old road corridor, which is a deeded right-of-way across private lands, under the I-87 Northway, and on the road within the Hoffman Notch Primitive Area. The rights for the parking area and access to Hoffman Notch were purchased prior to the UMP and for the intent of recreational access. Though a new trail outside of this corridor could be built, this location is almost entirely in sustainable condition, and being in a primitive corridor it is minimally invasive to the Wilderness Area, so this location is preferred to minimize disturbance and intrusion into the wilderness and maximize sustainability. Private property lines, slope, drainage, and a stream crossing on Platt Brook guided the location of the rest of the trail. The current alignment is located in a manner that minimizes excessive slopes, poorly drained soils, and also places a stream crossing and bridge in an area where the stream is narrow and the banks are firm and stable, which will maximize sustainability and minimize the risk of erosion. Tree cover is consistent throughout the area, so it was not a main consideration in the general location of the trail, but it was strongly evaluated during the micro layout of the trail. Whenever possible tree cutting is minimized to maximize the remaining vegetation and help to blend the trail into its surrounding environment

Another possibility is not building the Jones Hill East Trail (the no-action alternative). If the Jones Hill East Trail is not built, the Jones Hill West Trail is only an out and back hike to the summit of Jones Hill. Additionally, the NCNST connection will need to exit the eastern terminus of Big Pond Trail on Hoffman Road. The connection to the Dirgy parking lot can still be made, but it would require hikers to use a 12-mile-long paved road walk along Hoffman Road, which does not have road shoulders, and also NYS Route 9 to make the trail connection. This is not a viable alternative due to road use contradicting the desired conditions and the overall intent of the NCNST discussed above. There are also safety concerns involving walking roads without shoulders and high traffic areas like on State highways. Also, the UMP proposes construction of the Jones Hill East Trail "*Regardless of the North Country National Scenic Trail…"*.

Description of Use of Motorized Equipment and/or Motor Vehicles (if any)

Chainsaws may be used during approved offseason periods to clear the corridor. No other motorized equipment or vehicles will be used in the construction of this trail due to its Wilderness and Primitive classification.

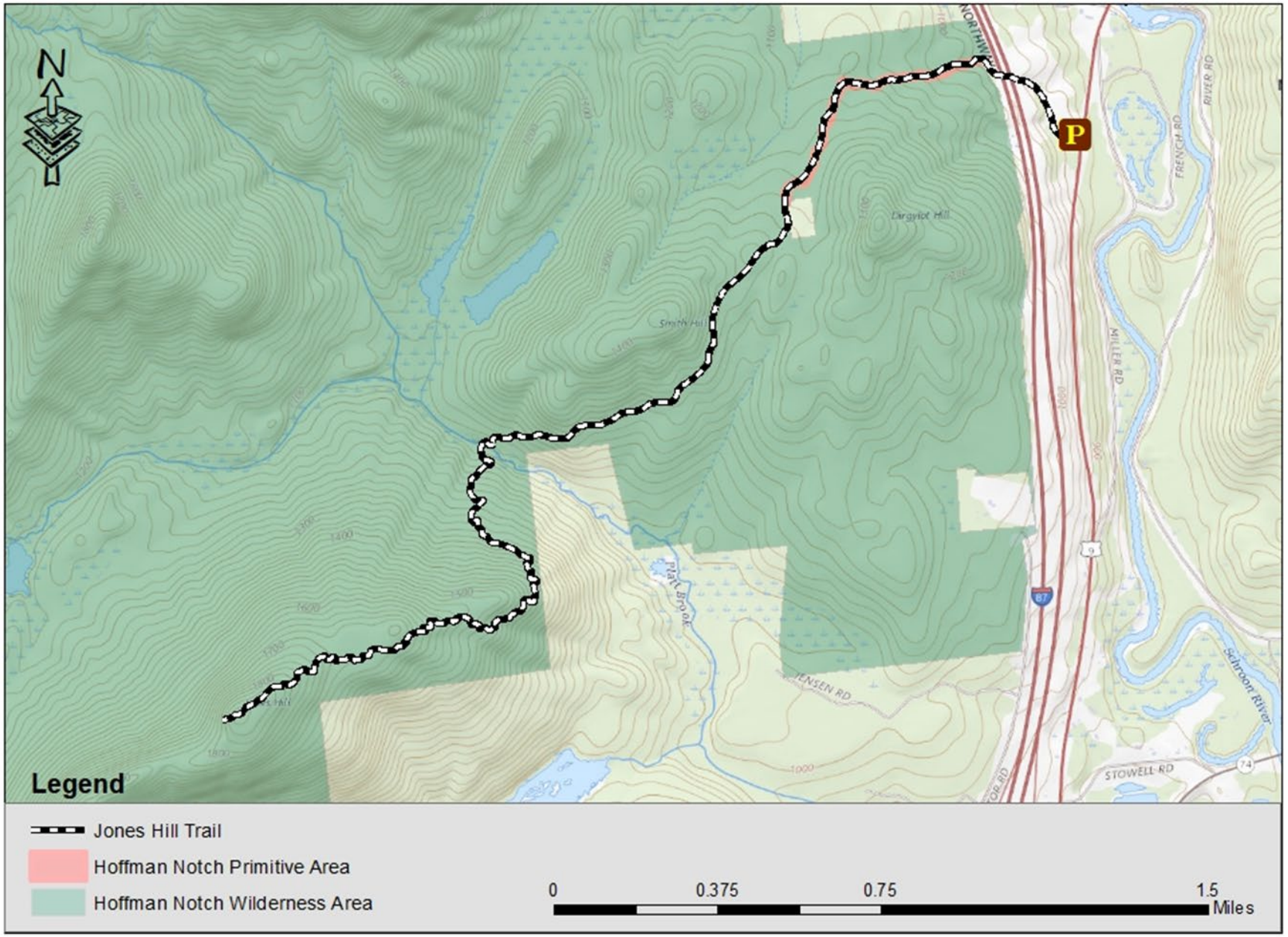
Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

The construction of this trail will not meet the standards for an accessible trail. Compliance with accessibility requirements is not practical because compliance would fundamentally alter the nature of the proposed hiking trail. Bringing the trail into compliance with accessibility standards would also result in more terrain manipulation and tree cutting. Given these considerations, a wilderness foot trail will be constructed as prescribed in the UMP.

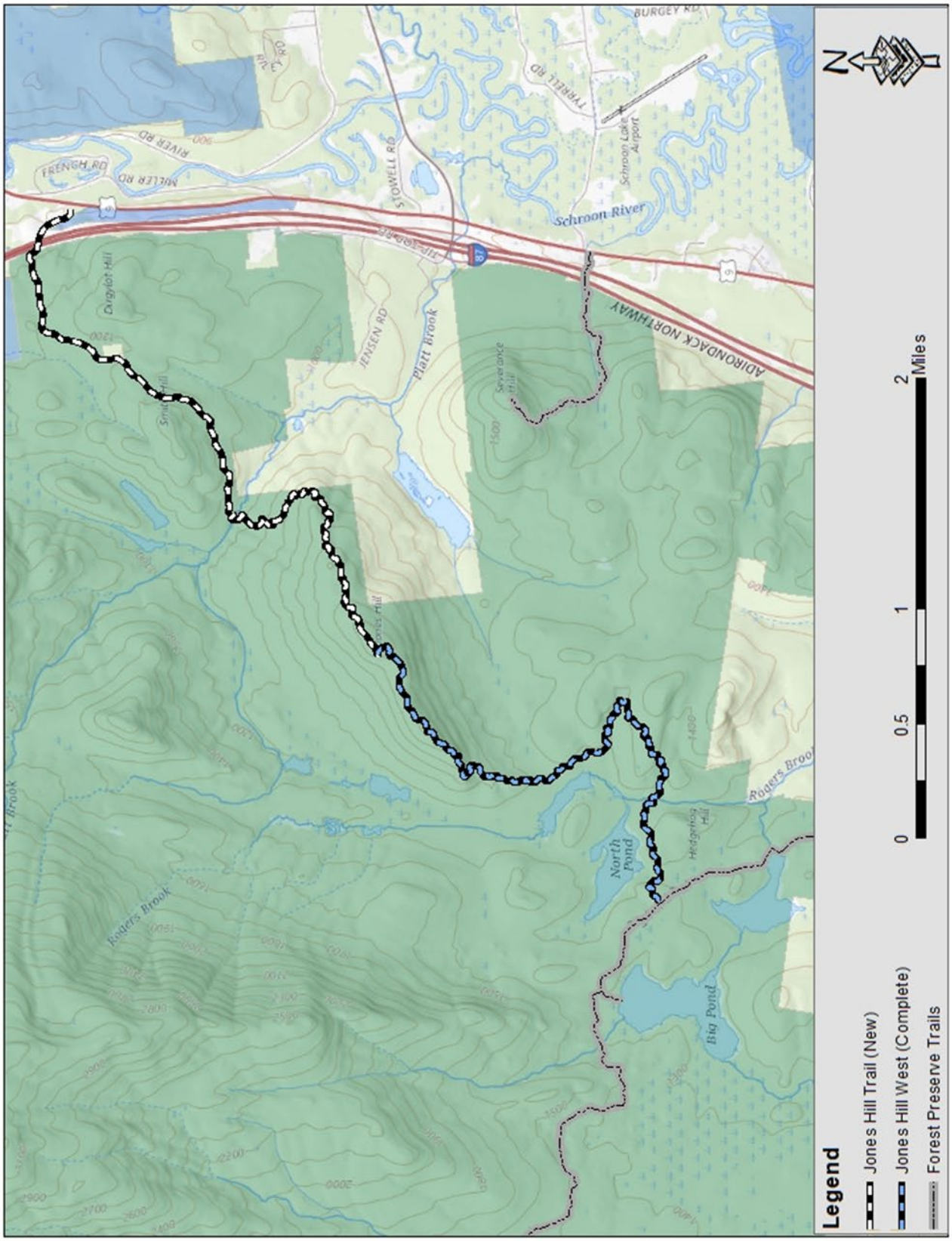
Other Relevant Considerations

Once this western section of trail is complete between Jones Hill and State Route 9 the entire Jones Hill Trail from the Big Pond Trail to State Route 9 will be opened to the public. This trail will be marked with both DEC and North Country National Scenic Trail markers. Portions of the Big Pond and Hoffman Notch Trails previously identified for inclusion as components of the North Country National Scenic Trail will also be marked with NCNST markers at this time.

Jones Hill to State Route 9



Jones Hill Trail



Prepared by (Name & Title): Robert Ripp Date: 2/8/2023

Phone: 518-897-1291

Approvals:

Comments:

REGULATORY CLEARANCE CHECKLIST – STATE LANDS and CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECTS					
PROGRAM	PERMIT	REQUIRED		SECURED BY	COMMENTS
		YES	NO	(NAME)	
Air Resources	Restricted Burning	☐	☒		
Mineral Resources	Mining	☐	☒		
Materials Management	Solid Waste Mgt. Fac.	☐	☒		
Water	Dam Safety Review	☐	☒		
	Const. in Flood Hazard	☐	☒		
	Public Water Supply	☐	☒		
	SPDES	☐	☒		
Spills Management	Petro. Bulk Storage	☐	☒		
Lands and Forests	Unit Management Plan	☒	☐	Robert Ripp	Approved in the 2012 HNWA UMP
	Tree Cutting	☒	☐	Robert Ripp	263 trees 1-3 inch DBH 61 Trees 3-16 inch DBH
	Protected Native Plants	☐	☒		
	Historic Preservation	☐	☒		
Fish and Wildlife	Freshwater Wetlands	☐	☒		
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	☐	☒		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	☐	☒		
	EAF	☐	☒		
	Negative Declaration	☐	☒		
	Env. Impact Statement	☐	☒		
	Water Quality Cert.	☐	☒		
DEC (other)	CP-17	☐	☒		
	Commissioner (aircraft,motorized equipment)	☐	☒		
	Flight Request	☐	☒		
	Contract Clearance Sh.	☐	☒		
	DOB Exemption	☐	☒		
Other Agencies	APA MOU	☐	☒		
	APA Wetlands Permit	☐	☒		
	Corps. of Engineers	☐	☒		
	Building Permits	☐	☒		
	Local Permits	☐	☒		
	Easements	☐	☒		
	Highway Enter DOT	☐	☒		
	Wastewater Disposal	☐	☒		